



The Lincoln Kinsman

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The Family of the President's Uncle Mordecai

Mordecai or "Mordeke", as it was spelled in the early days, is the most distinguishing given name among the Lincoln generations in America. Its earliest appearance is in the family of Samuel Lincoln and wife, when their third son was named Mordecai. This child, born on June 19, 1655, lived only a few days. Two years later on June 14, 1657 another son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Lincoln and he was also named Mordecai.

This summer the editor of Lincoln Kinsman stood before a grave in the Groveland Cemetery, North Scituate, Massachusetts and read this inscription:

"Here lies ye body of Mr. Mordeke Lincoln who dyed November ye 28, 1727 in ye 71 year of his age."

This tombstone is without doubt the earliest memorial in the country

erected to commemorate the life of a member of the President Lincoln family. The introducing into the Lincoln clan of the rather unusual name, Mordecai, has been more helpful than any other lead in tracing the lineage of Abraham Lincoln. It may also allow us some day to discover the surname of Mrs. Samuel Lincoln, still unidentified, but probably responsible for the name Mordecai becoming a Lincoln heritage.

A son of the Massachusetts Mordecai, who was named for his father, moved to New Jersey and later on into Pennsylvania where he lies buried in the old cemetery of the Friends at Exeter. The Mordecai who died in Exeter, also named one of his sons Mordecai, and two of his nephews had already been named for him. Furthermore, there were three grandchildren also named for Mordecai of Exeter, and one of these became the uncle of Abraham Lincoln.

The early life of Abraham Lincoln's Uncle Mordecai is presented in the June 1939 issue of *The Kinsman*. The story in the current number has to do primarily with the descendants of Mordecai.

The Mudd Family

The wife of Mordecai Lincoln was Mary Mudd, a daughter of Luke and Mary Mudd. The Mudds were a substantial Catholic family of Maryland and were undoubtedly members of a league of sixty families, who in 1785, pledged themselves to emigrate to Kentucky and to settle in adjacent communities for protection against the Indians. One group of these people called the Cartwrights Creek settlement, was situated on a tributary of Beech Fork, in what was then Nelson County, later Washington County. It was on Beech Fork where the Widow Lincoln established her home shortly after the massacre of her husband in 1786. The family of Luke Mudd and the children of the Widow Lincoln grew up in the same neighborhood. Mordecai, the oldest son of the widow, married Mary Mudd in 1792. There were three boys and three girls born to this union, the boys were named Abraham, James Bradford and Mordecai. The girls were Elizabeth, Mary Rowena and Martha.

Nearly fifty years ago a grandson of Mordecai Lincoln, interviewed in Fountain Green, Illinois, gave this brief summary of the closing years of Mordecai and his wife, Mary:

"My father, James B. Lincoln, was the first of the family to come here. That was before Fountain Green was

named. I was very small. I should say it was just before 1830. Next came my grandfather, who was Mordecai Lincoln. He rode horseback all of the way from Kentucky, leaving grandmother there to come out later with my uncle. Sometime after grandfather came from Kentucky, Uncle Abraham brought grandmother to Hancock County. Grandfather did not live many years after coming to Illinois. When he died there was no way to get a coffin. The neighbors cut down a linn tree, hewed out punch-eons and made a coffin of them." Mordecai's burial place is unmarked.

Abraham Lincoln

The fact that the oldest son of Mordecai and Mary Lincoln bore a similar name to that of the President has caused much confusion in Lincoln history and contributed greatly to many untenable traditional statements about the birth and childhood of the more illustrious Abraham.

The people of Washington County, Kentucky probably never will become thoroughly convinced that President Lincoln was not born in the Beech Fork community. They know that there was an Abraham Lincoln born there and they recall the fact of his birth. However, the Abraham, who first saw light of day in Washington County, was not Abraham, son of Thomas and Nancy (Hanks) Lincoln, but Abraham, son of Mordecai and Mary (Mudd) Lincoln. The President was born in what was then Hardin County, later Larue, twenty-five miles west of the Beech Fork community.

Not only did Washington County claim the birthplace of the President, but it was also argued that he was a good sized boy by the time his parents left for Hardin County. Abraham, son of Mordecai, was about nine when his parents moved to that part of Hardin County, which later became Grayson. Apparently it was this child Abraham, who was remembered instead of the President.

The confusion of the President's childhood days with those of Abraham, son of Mordecai, contributed somewhat to the widely circulated tradition that the President was an illegitimate child of Nancy Hanks. It was claimed by those who held this viewpoint, that when Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married in Washington County in 1806 that Abraham, Nancy's son, was a small boy running about the cabin home where his mother lived.

The story still persists that Thomas Lincoln was paid for marrying Nancy and assuming the paternity of her child, Abraham. It was the removal to Hardin County of Mordecai and Elizabeth Lincoln with their son Abraham which occurred in 1806, that was confused with the bridal trip of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln to Hardin County made during that same year. No one with any factual knowledge about the paternity of Abraham Lincoln attaches any importance to any of the purely traditional stories about the President's illegitimacy.

Not only did this Abraham, son of Mordecai, cause confusion with respect to the President's birth and childhood, but he also was the cause

of some erroneous conclusions drawn about his cousin's early religious environment. In 1926 Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago claimed Abraham Lincoln, the President, was of the Catholic Faith and that he made six ornate chairs to be used at a mass conducted by Father St. Cyr. Abraham, the son of Thomas, is not known to have been affiliated with the Catholic Church, while it is well known that Abraham, the son of Mordecai, embraced the faith of his mother, who was a Catholic. There was a member of this Mordecai Lincoln family, who was a cabinetmaker that did the work suggested by the Cardinal.

Abraham was probably about 9 years old when his parents moved to Grayson County, formerly Hardin County, in 1806. His name first appeared on the Tax Commissioner's books in 1818 as an adult 21 years old or older. That year he listed one horse for taxation. The following year, after his becoming of age, he traveled back to Washington County, where his early childhood was spent, and on January 20, 1819 married Elizabeth Lucretia Mudd, an own cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother, Hezekiah Mudd.

As early as 1821 Abraham Lincoln listed for taxation, one slave, three horses, and two tracts of land both on Green River, one consisting of 200 acres, the other of 750 acres. This is undoubtedly a part of the land that was bequeathed to him by his father. It passed on to him by some transaction and presumably a portion of it was once in possession of his grandfather, the pioneer Abra-

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ham Lincoln, for whom he was named. As might be expected from the fact that he owned nearly 1000 acres of land, he was a farmer and followed in this profession. While living in Grayson County, he served at one time as Justice of the Peace, indicating that he was a man of some stability.

About the year 1828 Abraham moved his family to Fountain Green, Hancock County, Illinois. Here he lived until his death, and his will was filed for probate on March 25, 1852. The will had been signed on October 14, 1851.

There were seven children born to Abraham and Elizabeth Mudd Lincoln, four girls and three boys. Four of the children were born in Kentucky and three of them in Illinois.

Priscilla, the oldest daughter, married John Smith and remained in Kentucky, later on settling in Springfield, where both her father and mother had lived in the early years. Priscilla had one child, Priscilla Florida, who first married John Anderson, and second, Charles C. McGill.

Parmelia, the second daughter, moved with her parents to Illinois, but she never married and died in the town of LaHarpe, on December 12, 1895.

The third child, who was also a daughter, named Mary Jane, passed away on August 29, 1888 at LaHarpe, Illinois, and is buried in the family lot there.

The first son, Robert, moved on from Kentucky to Hancock County with his parents, but remained unmarried through life and died on September 5, 1868. He is buried with other members of the family in Hancock County.

The only son of Abraham Lincoln to marry was Hezekiah, who was born August 9, 1829, presumably in Hancock County. He first made his residence at Fountain Green and later moved to LaHarpe. He was a farmer, lawyer and merchant and a substantial citizen of the community where he lived. On January 14, 1869, when he was nearly forty years old, he married at Pe-

oria, Illinois, Phoebe Ann, daughter of Peter and Ann Hyers Brewer, but they never had any children.

The sixth child and second son, Nicholas, was born May 24, 1834 and although he lived to be 54 years old, he died unmarried and is buried at LaHarpe.

The youngest child, Ellen, married John Sullivan of Hancock County on November 28, 1861. She died on December 12, 1895 at Fort Worth, Texas, where she was then living. There were no children born to this union.

The similarity of the fading out of this family and the extinction of the President Lincoln family as far as male descendants bearing the name Lincoln is concerned, is remarkable, indeed. Although Abraham Lincoln, son of Mordecai, had seven children, there was but one grandchild, and this child was the daughter of one of Mordecai's daughters and, of course, did not bear the name Lincoln. There is not now living any male descendant of this Abraham Lincoln bearing the family name.

James Bradford Lincoln

The second child of Mordecai and Mary Mudd Lincoln, was named James Bradford and he was born in Grayson County, Kentucky, remaining there until after he became of age. Then he moved on to Sangamon County, Illinois in about 1828 and soon still further west to Fountain Green.

James Bradford followed the cabinetmaker's profession. At no time while living in Kentucky did he list

for taxation more than 150 acres of land and his livestock did not amount to more than 2 horses.

He seems to have prospered in Illinois and became quite an important citizen, serving as the first Justice of Peace in the County. He was also County Commissioner of Hancock County and appointed an United States Land Commissioner.

Before moving to Illinois he married in 1821, Frances, daughter of William and Frances Childers Day, and there were six children born to this union.

The oldest child, Thomas Jefferson, born April 20, 1822, died April 26, 1914. The maiden name of his wife was Martha Jane Bures.

The second child, Elizabeth, born in 1825 married William Dickerson. She died in Allen County, Kansas.

Mary Rowena was twice married, first to William, son of John and Mary French Lovely, and second to Charles Newton, son of John and Catherine Zwingler Bowman. By the first marriage there was one child named William Lovely, who married Amanda Burrow. By her second husband, Mary Rowena had six children, Eliza Bowman, who married George Scheifly; Robert Lee, who died at 18 years of age; Rosa May, who lived about a year; Emily Moore, who lived about two years; Charles Newton, who died the same year of his birth; and Thomas Edward, who married Evaline Hardy. It may be observed that only two of the six children by Rowena's second husband, survived childhood.

James' fourth child was Emily Susan, who lived to be 62 years old, but died unmarried at Fountain Green on May 20, 1892.

The fifth child and second son of James was born in Illinois in 1832 and died at Carthage, Illinois in 1906. The maiden name of his wife was Margaret Gibbons.

The youngest son in the family of James Bradford Lincoln was Charles Prentiss, who died at Fountain Green on April 4, 1858 at 21 years of age and unmarried.

Mordecai Lincoln, Jr.

Mordecai Lincoln, brother of the President's father, named his third child Mordecai for himself and in some respects this son is the most picturesque in the family. For some years after the others had moved to Illinois, Mordecai remained in Kentucky, his name appearing on the tax lists of Grayson County in 1836. There is no land listed for taxation against his name, but he did become a well-known figure in the town of Litchfield.

This Lincoln with the characteristic family name was the village shoemaker. He owned the building in which his business was established, using the first floor for his shop and the second floor for his dwelling place. Even as a middle-aged man he was known as "Old Mord". He had a fiddle made by a Revolutionary War soldier, and his evenings were spent making music for the town.

Mordecai Lincoln never married and it is said that his migration from

Kentucky to Illinois was due to his determination to escape matrimony. It appears as if he had fallen in love with a girl named "Patsy" and he was confident that if he remained in Kentucky he would marry her, so he chose without making known his intentions to anyone, to hastily put the Ohio River between him and his sweetheart, like so many of the other Lincolns, he was not of the marrying type.

When we find him in Illinois he is living with his mother, having changed his occupation somewhat from shoemaking to cabinet work. The six chairs which he made for William McDonough, who had charge of the local Catholic Church, were erroneously said to have been made by his brother Abraham. There was further confusion when Cardinal Mundelein claimed these same six chairs were made by Mordecai's cousin, President Abraham Lincoln.

Mordecai is said to have been very much like President Lincoln in his mannerisms and in his hesitancy to marry and also in his personal appearance. It is said that on one occasion Abraham Lincoln, while campaigning in Illinois, visited with Mordecai. Mordecai died unmarried at Fountain Green on June 15, 1867.

Elizabeth Lincoln

Another cousin marriage in Mordecai Lincoln's family, was the wedding of Elizabeth Lincoln and Benjamin Mudd, Benjamin being a brother of Elizabeth Mudd. The brother and sister, Abraham and Elizabeth Lincoln, having married

the sister and brother, Elizabeth and Benjamin Mudd. Benjamin Mudd and his wife took up their residence in Scotland County, Missouri, and were the parents of eleven children, all except two of them surviving infancy. Their names and family connections follow:

The oldest child, Raymond Horace, married Mrs. Frances Jane (Bourn) Billups, to which union there were born three children. Hezekiah, the second son, married Elizabeth Gristy and they had six children. Mary Loretta married Asa Johnson and they were the parents of eleven children. James Lincoln, born in 1821 in Grace County, first married Elizabeth Wiley, by whom he had eleven children. Later he was married to Ellen Hall. There was but one child from this marriage and it died in infancy. Another daughter, Elizabeth Ann, born in 1825, married Samuel McAtee. They also settled in Scotland County, Missouri, and ten children were born to them. Martha Rowena, who was born in Kentucky in 1826, married James Rogers. They had but two children and Martha Rowena died in 1915 and is buried at Sidney, Iowa. Another son, Benjamin Franklin, married Catherine Ann Medley and nine children were born to them. One son was named Abraham Mudd and he was born in 1832, but died in 1871 unmarried. The youngest son, Robert Leven, married Frances Caroline Corrie, and to this union there were born three children. Robert died at Greenville, Illinois, December 18, 1920.

Mary Rowena Lincoln

The name of Mordecai's wife, Mary, is perpetuated through the naming of the second daughter Mary Rowena. Mary, with the appended Rowena, became a very popular name among the descendants of the President's uncle and aunt.

The name of Mary Rowena's husband was George Knisley and they had three children.

Their oldest child, Mary Janette, married Charles Gristy and they had six children. John, the oldest son, married Fanny Phillips, to which union were born four children. James, the youngest child, married Madeline Midley, and five children were born to them.

Martha Lincoln

The youngest child of Mordecai and Mary Mudd Lincoln was a daughter named Martha. She moved with the family to Fountain Green where she married, Washington Neighbors. No children were born to this union. Martha is buried at Fountain Green.

With respect to the descendants of Mordecai Lincoln, brother of Thomas Lincoln, father of the President, it might be said that if any male descendants are still living who bear the name Lincoln, their ancestry must be traced through Mordecai's son, James Bradford Lincoln, as both Abraham and Mordecai, Jr. left no male descendants bearing their name.

A Family Memorial

There has been preserved one memorial of the family and the history of it is given in an old newspaper clipping which reviews the story of a Wideawake rally in Illinois.

"At Keokuk was held one of the greatest rallies of the Northwest. Wideawakes marched in from many miles around. A portrait in oil of Abraham Lincoln, life size, was offered for the largest delegation of Wideawakes attending the rally. Fountain Green, although off the railroad, sent overland the delegation of Wideawakes which captured the prize. Conspicuous in the com-

pany was Thomas Lincoln, (son of James Bradford Lincoln) 'Uncle Tommy,' the namesake of Abraham Lincoln's father, today the patriarch of the Hancock County Lincolns. The portrait was carried back to Fountain Green and placed in the care of the widow of James B. Lincoln, the first Lincoln of the neighborhood. It was held a treasured relic of Fountain Green until a few years ago. One day the portrait was taken out and, with Thomas Lincoln and his maiden sister, Emily Lincoln, standing beside it, was photographed. A few years ago Thomas Lincoln took the interesting relic to Springfield and placed it in the Lincoln memorial collection."